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Hizb ut-Tahrir

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In January 2024, the UK government proscribed the Islamist organisation Hizb ut-Tahrir (Hu-T) as a terrorist organisation, a decision seemingly based on an understanding that while the group explicitly states it doesn't undertake "material" violent actions as an organisation, its ideological views on violence and jihad are deemed to have violated UK counter terrorism legislation (namely the incitement and glorification of terrorism through the expression of support for terrorism).

In banning Hu-T, the UK government cited specific examples related to the attacks launched on 7 October against Israel by Hamas and Islamic Jihad. The announcement of the intent to proscribe the organisation specifically cited a statement issued by the Palestinian branch of Hu-T welcoming the attack on 7 October. Deeming the UK branch to be part of the same organisation, the group was seemingly deemed liable for statements and actions undertaken by the party in any of its branches, and therefore considered to be inciting terrorism.

While proscription has been threatened before, first by Tony Blair's Labour government and then again by David Cameron's Conservative government – on both occasions the government was advised against this decision due to legal analysis concluding the group did not meet the required legal criteria.

This article provides an Explainer of Hizb ut-Tahrir to contextualise these events and the group's activities and ideologies.

Background

Hu-T is an international revolutionary Islamist party that was founded in 1953 in Jerusalem. Its aim is to establish a global Islamist State, where absolute power of the State, its executive, legislative and judicial authority lies solely with the office of the Head of State. Whether called a Caliph, sultan, head of state or leader is unimportant, what matters is that all power to legislate Islamic laws lies with him. This is then filtered through various functions of a modern state – a parliament with limited powers and remits on legislation not covered by their interpretations of shariah rulings or religious rules. Unlike the Muslim Brotherhood, Hu-T completely rejects any notions of democracy, democratic participation, power sharing, gradualism, pragmatism or human rights as anti-Islamic and alien to their ideology.

As such Hu-T does not consider any state, polity, government valid in the Muslim majority countries and any territory that ever came under Muslim rule as being occupied Muslim territory. They do not allow for diplomatic relations with any government, adopting a similar approach to ISIS towards Muslim states, borders, governments and entities – none are to be recognised. Once Hu-T comes to power they are required to forcibly "re-unite" all Muslims in these countries under their rule as one Caliphate, spelling this vision out in their manifesto.

Ideology

A pseudo anti-imperialist viewpoint can be seen in the writings of the founding thinkers of H-uT, connecting back to the notion of Western powers "conspiring" to bring an end to the Ottoman Caliphate. Hizb ut-Tahrir sees 3 March 1924 (when the Caliphate ended) as the fateful date that brought about an end of 13 centuries of "Islamic" governance. Given the history of colonialism in both Muslim majority countries and ones with significant Muslim populations such as India, anti-Western and anti-colonialist perspectives form a significant part of the Islamist ideological world view. This is often connected with the notion of the creation of Israel as a unique evil, and a conspiracy against Islam and Muslims. This forms a significant aspect of the Islamist world view, and is cited by Hizb ut-Tahrir as the cause for its existence.

The methodology of the organisation is a tiered revolutionary approach. It adopted the same methodology of the Baathist Party – an Arab National Socialist Party – which the founder Taqi al-Din al-Nabhani belonged to prior to founding Hu-T. This was to create a revolutionary vanguard to foment a change in the society, by what it calls interacting with society and changing its political ideas. This is intended to create a strong public opinion for the establishment of the Caliphate and ruling by the Party's perception of the Shariah, as a means of taking power by popular uprising or coup d'etat.

Their views of Jihad are imperialistic, framed in terms of waging war against "Kufr" or contra-Islamic states, which in their mind is every state except their own. As stated in their own manifesto, they differentiate between:

1. Muslim majority countries which should not have any diplomatic ties – they must be forcefully annexed even if millions of people are sacrificed to this end.
2. Occupied 'Muslim/Islamic land' – any land which was previously under "Muslim rule" which Muslims must take a stance of actual warfare with and are at an active state of war with (k*afir harbi filan*).
3. Those countries which are either imperialistic and therefore potentially at war with Muslims like Western Powers (*kafir harbi hukman*) and those which potentially could be peaceful states where treaties and diplomatic ties could be established.

Views on violence

While limited peace treaties are permitted, Jihad requires a state of continuous war against every ideology and belief system – and therefore in principle every other state, until they all come under the rule of their caliphate. In this sense their vision is no different to al-Qaeda and ISIS and would have been a significant influence on such groups, who hold the same imperialistic aspirations.

They also believe (https://henryjacksonsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/HIZB.pdf) in the legitimacy of suicide bombings and justifications of such attacks in Israel, and have even issued edicts to

permit hijacking of Israeli planes, but do not believe that is the role of Islamic revivalist parties, nor advocate it for their members.

Various offshoots of the Hizb ut-Tahrir movement have led to violent uprisings or have been linked to violent Jihadist groups, even though they are avowedly non-violent as an organisation. These include Palestinian Jihadist movements, al-Muhajiroun (https://www.newstatesman.com/long-reads/2020/02/al-muhajiroun-and-long-tail-uk-terror) which had significant (https://eeradicalization.com/assessing-the-threat-of-al-muhajiroun/) membership of terror cells (https://hopenothate.org.uk/research-old/al-muhajiroun-network/) in the UK and eventually allegiance (https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/sep/06/anjem-choudary-jailed-for-five-years-and-six-months-for-urging-support-of-isis) to ISIS. This group was founded by Omar Bakri Mohammad (https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/isis-leak-reveals-exiled-british-7536150) who left Hu-T to then aspire to associate with al-Qaeda and eventually swear his allegiance to ISIS.

In Germany, Hu-T was banned (https://www.hamburg.de/innenbehoerde/archiv/232002/verbot-der-hizb-ut-tahrir-artikel/) by the Federal Interior Ministry in 2003, which argued that Hu-T's ideology was directed against the "idea of peaceful coexistence between peoples" due to its promotion of antisemitic propaganda and the denial of Israel's right to exist. While Hu-T has therefore been unable to operate officially, groups (https://taz.de/Nahostdebatte-in-Deutschland/!5969353/) such as Muslim Interaktiv, Generation Islam and Realität Islam continue to spread Hu-T-inspired ideology, according to German security agencies and extremism experts.

This Explainer was uploaded on 19 January 2024.

Related

(https://www.isdglobal.org/explainers/us-antifa-groups/)

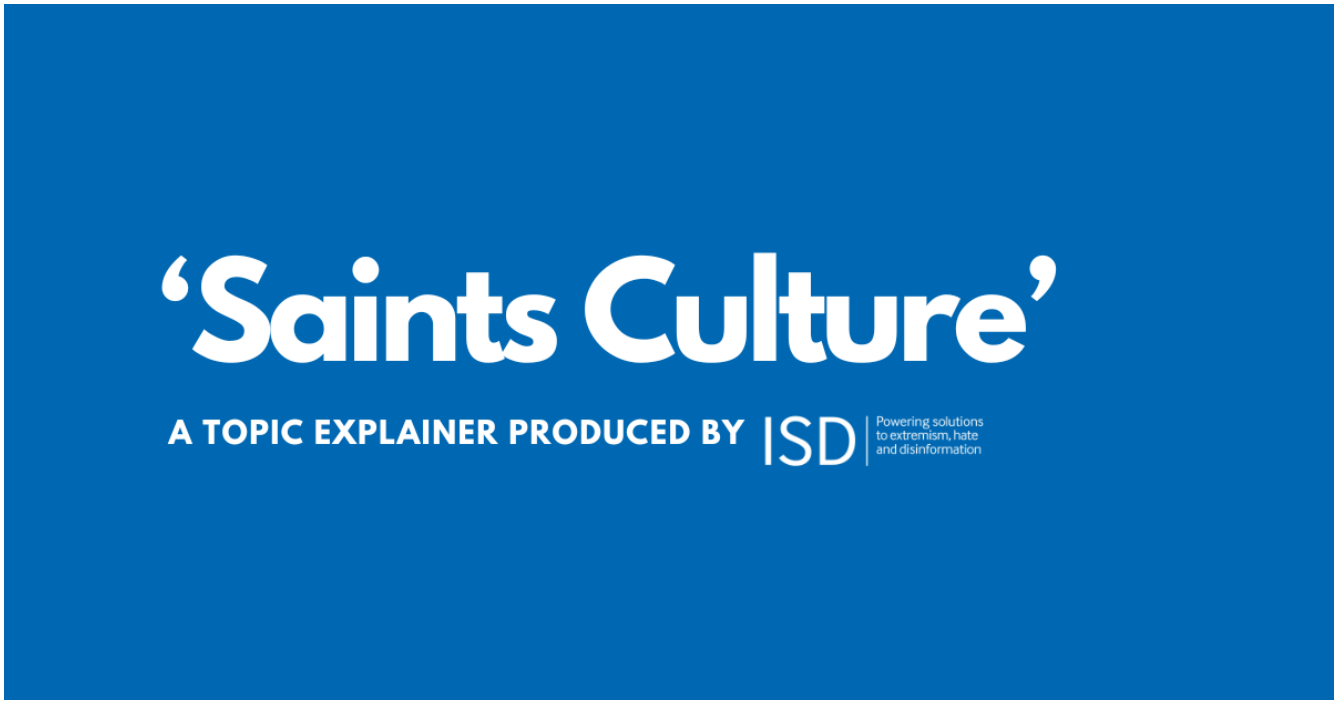
US 'Antifa' Groups (https://www.isdglobal.org/explainers/us-antifa-groups/)

'Antifa' groups operate in a mostly decentralized way but share a belief that they're resisting fascist ideology, primarily through protests and counterdemonstrations against far-right extremism, utilizing tactics such as doxxing, and at times criminal activity.

(https://www.isdglobal.org/explainers/neo-confederate-ideology/)

Neo-Confederate Ideology (https://www.isdglobal.org/explainers/neo-confederate-ideology/)

'Neo-Confederate' refers to individuals or groups echoing US Confederate beliefs, emphasizing states' rights & heritage preservation, with some overlap with white supremacist ideologies.



(https://www.isdglobal.org/explainers/saints-culture/)

‘Saints Culture’ (https://www.isdglobal.org/explainers/saints-culture/)

The "Saints Culture" within the white supremacist movement glorifies individuals who commit hate-motivated violence, a phenomenon revitalised in online spaces.

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